

MEXICAN WOLF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT WORK GROUP
Final Summary Notes for April 22, 2008
Note: This is a Public Document

Location: Manor House Restaurant, across the street from the Quality Inn & Suites, 420 East Highway 70, Safford, Arizona 85546; Phone 928.428.3200; Fax 928.428.3288

Time: AZ time: 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm (Note: the meeting will adjourn early, if business has been completed)

Host: Arizona Game and Fish Department

Participants: AMOC Lead Agencies: AGFD Terry B. Johnson (Chair); NMGFD Matt Wunder; USDA-APHIS WS Dave Bergman; USFS Cathy Taylor; USFWS John Oakleaf; WMAT Cynthia Dale

1. Welcome, introductions, ground rules, and agenda review

Terry Johnson started the meeting at 1800 MST. All agency representatives and the seven nongovernmental individuals attending introduced themselves. Terry then announced that until further notice John Morgart (USFWS) is on extended leave, due to illness. In Morgart's absence, John Oakleaf is acting as the USFWS AMOC representative (in addition to covering his existing IFT, Assistant Recovery Coordinator, and San Carlos Apache Reservation wolf responsibilities), Maggie Dwire is helping with Recovery Coordinator office work, and Wally Murphy is providing back-up for both Oakleaf and Dwire and any uncovered aspects of Morgart's work. Before moving on with the agenda, everyone present extended their best wishes to Morgart on a speedy and full recovery.

2. NMDGF presentation on elk population model

R.J. Kirkpatrick and Stewart Liley, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, presented preliminary modeling efforts to evaluate effects of Mexican wolves on elk populations within the New Mexico portion of the Blue Range wolf recovery area, and demonstrated how information is incorporated into the model. R.J. stated that the model is a tool for people to better understand what is happening with wolves/elk.

The model starts with an estimated elk population number and adds variables that affect elk population (wolves depredate on elk, elk die of natural causes, elk are poached, calves are born into the population, etc.). Within each year, several life stages are analyzed separately, since variables have different effects and magnitude depending on when in the life cycle of an elk or season they occur (calving, hunting season, etc.). After comparing their model to actual elk surveys conducted in the field, they found that the cow to calf ratio was better and the population estimate was higher than estimated by the model.

Comment: How did NMDGF determine wolf predation rates? Was it by energetics information only? **Response:** The model incorporates energetics, but adds information from Dan Stark's predation study in AZ-NM and information from the Northern Rockies.

Comment: Why is poaching not included in all seasons? **Response:** We believe there is a higher rate of poaching during the fall hunting seasons, due to increased opportunity, but will look into whether it should be put into other seasons of the model.

Comment: Are the wolves in the model only adults? **Response:** The number of pups was taken into consideration, although it will be difficult to determine when their presence will call for us to add more elk to what is being consumed. It may increase as soon as they're born, it may increase when they are able to start eating solid food.

Comment: Was this the same presentation given to the NM Game Commission recently? **Response:** Yes.

Comment: I'd like to see you add legal killings through the NM Jennings Act. **Response:** No response recorded.

Comment: Why are you interested in precipitation, forage? **Response:** A good precipitation year can affect reproduction, forage, body condition, etc.

Comment: If you don't feel there is a lot of competition between cattle and elk for forage, why does NMDGF deal with depredation? **Response:** Depredation deals more with private property damage (crops).

Comment: Will the spreadsheet be available on the web or by request? **Response:** It isn't on the web, but we have given it to people who request it. NMDGF is worried that if we put it on the web, people will take it as absolute fact, not a tool that is still evolving.

Comment: Is this going to get into the hands of the decision-makers? **Response:** We are making more presentations in order to get this info out.

Comment: What is the confidence level for the elk population? **Response:** Preseason 2006, the population estimate for elk within the NMDGF portion of the recovery area was 15,750 - 18,700.

Comment: The spreadsheet has an AZ tab as well as a NM tab. Do you have the same information for AZ as for NM? **Response:** We hope the cooperators can apply our methods and have comparable information for AZ and for the WMAT, but at this time we have not gone that far. We are still perfecting the tool.

3. Miscellaneous Interagency Field Team updates

The Interagency Field Team provided a handout that addressed several of the topics below (see Attachment A).

- a. Vacancies, hirings, and other staffing issues. See Attachment A.
- b. Depredation and nuisance responses in 1st quarter 2008. See Attachment A.

- c. Outreach activities in 1st quarter 2008. See Attachment A.
- d. End-of-Year Count for 2007. See Attachment A.
- e. Annual Work Plan for 2008. The Annual Work Plan has been drafted but discussions among the IFT, AMOC, and Lead Agency Directors regarding priorities and resource allocation are still in progress. The final work plan will be posted to the website as soon as it is approved.
- f. Annual Reports for 2007. The Reintroduction Project and Recovery Program annual reports are nearly complete, and will be posted to the website as soon as they are approved.
- g. Other Field Team activities. John Oakleaf also discussed a translocation (mated pair) that has been under consideration since late 2007. In late April, we determined the female was not pregnant. Therefore, we are re-evaluating the translocation with regard to place and time.

Comment: What is a confirmed wolf depredation? Is it confirmed by a Federal agency?
Response: Wildlife Services, a Federal agency, investigates depredations per SOP 11.0 and determines whether wolves were responsible. Information from all available sources is considered, but Wildlife Services makes the final call on whether it was a wolf depredation.

Comment: Is there a reason why breeding pair has been redefined? Can you FOIA the Solicitor's Opinion referenced as a basis for the change? I wrote USFWS about this and have not received an answer.
Response: The USFWS response to your March 7 2008 letter was mailed on or about April 8, 2008. We are surprised that you do not have it yet. Here is a copy (copies were provided to all present). Anyone can submit a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request for relevant information, but nobody here can determine or suggest how USFWS would respond. Our experience is that not all Solicitor's Opinions are FOIA-able.

In closing, Terry Johnson noted that AMOC and the IFT are working with the Lead Agency Directors on a more robust package for 2008 and 2009 translocations and initial releases, and hope to have it finalized by the October AMWG meeting.

4. Miscellaneous AMOC updates

- a. NEPA scoping process for the 10(j) rule

John Slown (USFWS) gave a brief update on the NEPA scoping process. USFWS received 13,598 comments during the August-December 2007 comment period; more than 12,000 of those came by email. Most emails were three versions of form letters. A draft report on the public comment will be submitted to USFWS on April 30 by the contractor. It will likely identify 24 significant issues, several of which will have two or more sub-issues. These issues statements will assist in identifying the issues to be addressed by the EIS. AMOC will begin discussing the issues as soon as USFWS provides the contractor's report. We will also begin scoping out a process for further action, and hope to have that plan in place for discussion at our July AMWG meeting, or very soon thereafter.

Comment: Will the comments be posted on the web? **Response:** We hope to be able to do that soon, all comments will go on the web.

Comment: How soon do you think you'll have an answer for counties seeking cooperator status? **Response:** Six counties have responded to information from the Service about obtaining cooperator status. USFWS is continuing discussions with other counties (from New Mexico) that did not respond affirmatively to the initial framework for cooperator status.

b. Clarification Memos for SOPs 5.0 (Initial Releases) and 6.0 (Translocations)

After considering the public comment on these Clarification Memos, AMOC has agreed on their final form, the Lead Agency Directors have concurred, and the final versions will be posted to the website within a week or so and they will be implemented immediately.

c. New SOPs 25.0 (Media Access) and 27.0 (Population Monitoring)

After considering the public comment on these two new SOPs, AMOC has almost agreed on their final form. A few details remain to be wrapped up, hopefully tomorrow. We anticipate posting the final versions to the website within a week or so and they will be implemented immediately.

d. Clarification Memos for SOPs 11.0 (Depredation Incident Investigation), and 13.0 (Control of Mexican Wolves)

AMOC and the Lead Agency Directors have almost agreed on the final form of these two Clarification Memos. A few details remain to be wrapped up, hopefully tomorrow. We anticipate posting the public review draft versions to the website within a week or so. The public review period will extend for 30 days, after which AMOC and the Lead Agency Directors will confer again on what, if any, additional changes to make. We hope to present the final versions at the July AMWG meeting.

5. Other business

Terry Johnson asked whether there are other topics to cover.

Comment: For the Annual Work Plan, are there any quantitative numbers for wolves and breeding pairs. **Response:** This document determines priorities for IFT activities during the calendar year, and what agency staff are available to conduct the activities. It might or might not reference the Project's population goals (total numbers and breeding pairs) for 2008, which at this point are simply to increase the wild population through natural (wild) growth and through aggressive translocation and initial release, to the extent that all relevant factors allow. Based on wolves in the wild right now, we could have at least as many as 10 breeding pairs at the end of 2008. We would hope for more, but we would be very happy with 10.

6. Dates and locations of other 2008 and 2009 AMWG meetings

The upcoming 2008 and 2009 AMWG meeting dates and locations are as follows (specific facilities have yet to be determined [TBD, below] for two 2009 meetings in New Mexico):

2008: July 30, Clifton-Morenci AZ (Morenci Club), 6 pm – 9 pm

October 28, Glenwood NM (facility TBD by NMDGF), 6 pm - 9 pm

2009: January 27 (Silver City NM; facility TBD by NMDGF), 6 pm – 9 pm

April 28 (San Carlos AZ; Apache Gold Casino & Conference Center), 6 pm -9 pm

July 29 (Hon-Dah AZ; Hon-Dah Casino & Conference Center), 6 pm – 9 pm

October 27 (Truth or Consequences NM; facility TBD by NMDGF), 6 pm – 9 pm

Information on these public meetings and other aspects of the Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project will continue to be disseminated through *Endangered Species Updates*. Interested parties are reminded that the *ES Updates* is a self-subscription electronic newsletter, and a subscription form can be accessed at: <http://azgfd.gov/signup>.

7. Adjournment

Business having been completed, Terry Johnson adjourned the meeting at 2000 MST.

Attachment A (IFT Quarterly Progress Update)

Mexican Wolf Adaptive Management Work Group
Interagency Field Team Update
April 22, 2008

Vacancies and Hirings:

Ken Mills NMGFD IFT, James Waddell NMGFD Summer Intern, Annmarie Houser USFWS Biologist, Rebecca Mowrey USFWS Temporary Hire, Beth Wocjik USFWS Volunteer, Alison Greenleaf USFWS Volunteer, Cecilia Schmidt AGFD Temporary Duty Assignment

Depredations and Nuisance Responses First Quarter 2008:

<u>Report Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Type of Incident</u>	<u>Determination</u>
01-06-08	Nutrioso, AZ	Horse injured	Confirmed uncollared wolves
01-16-08	Nutrioso, AZ	Horse colt killed	Confirmed uncollared wolves
02-07-08	Nutrioso, AZ	Horse injury	Cause of injury indeterminate
02-12-08	Vernon, AZ	Dead Cow	Unknown cause of death, non-wolf related
02-19-08	Luna, NM	Two dead calves	Confirmed coyotes
02-24-08	Aragon, NM	Dead cow	Unknown cause of death, non-wolf related
02-25-08	Chino Valley, AZ	Dead goat	Confirmed coyotes
03-11-08	SCAR	Dead cow w/ calf in birth canal	Confirmed Rim Pack AM1107 and AF858
03-19-08	Y Canyon, NM	Dead cow and calf	Non-wolf related. Cow died natural causes and calf killed by coyotes
03-24-08	Hardcastle Gap area NM	Dead calf	Confirmed killed by coyotes
03-26-08	Y Canyon, NM	Dead cow	Cause of death indeterminate
03-29-08	Hardcastle Gap area NM	Dead calf	Confirmed San Mateo Pack AF903 and AM1114
04-07-08	Cooney Prairie, NM	Dead calf	Confirmed Middle Fork Pack AM871, AF861, and F1115

Outreach Activities First Quarter 2008:

January AMWG meeting in Pinetop AZ; 14 non-agency attendees.

February 27, Maggie Dwire presentation to 25 Sierra Club members at the USFWS Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility.

March 7, Mike Godwin and Mike Sumner AGFD presented update to approx 20 Greenlee County Cattle Growers and Upper Eagle Creek and Blue River Watershed Association members.

March 17 and 18, Ken Mills, Renae Held, and Luanne Tafoya of the NMDGF field tour in GNF for 15 middle-school student winners of wolf related art and essay competition hosted by The Southwest Environmental Center in Las Cruces, NM. Also, three teachers and three Southwest Environmental Center staff members.

March 19, John Oakleaf (USFWS) and Mike Sumner (AGFD) met with Rick DaValos (USFS) and a permittee regarding possible translocation at Home Creek in Arizona.

2007 End of Year Count:

- 35 wolves observed during survey
- Ten wolves captured (six new collars; four replaced)
- Population estimate ≥ 52 wolves
- 12 packs (ten of which consist of at least one wild-born member)
- Four breeding pairs**
- ≥ 27 pups born, ≥ 9 survived through December 31st
- 11 pairs formed on their own in the wild
- 46 wild born wolves
- Two packs produced second generation wild born pups. As many as ten could do so in 2008.

**Defined as an adult male and an adult female with at least two pups produced during the previous breeding season that survived until December 31 of the year of their birth

Other IFT Activities:

M1039 was translocated in January after being captured outside the BRWRA in NM. On February 17, M1039 was recaptured just outside the BRWRA in NM, treated for injuries received from a lawfully-set coyote trap, and placed in captivity pending possible future release.

End